



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DIPARTIMENTO
DI FISICA E ASTRONOMIA
"AUGUSTO RIGHI"

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY "AUGUSTO RIGHI" - DIFA

**NOTICE N. 1/2024
FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCENTIVES TO MOBILITY FOR RESEARCH
MARCO POLO PROGRAM**

APPLICATION DEADLINE

27 MARCH 2024



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THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

- GIVEN the University Statute of Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, issued with D.R. n. 1203 of 13/12/2011 and, in particular, article 2.5 regarding internationalisation
- HAVING REGARD to the Decree of the Italian Minister of Education, University and Research "Regulations laying down procedures for the accreditation of PhD courses and locations and criteria for the establishment of PhD courses by accredited bodies", no. 226 of 12/14/2021
- GIVEN the regulations governing fixed-term researchers, issued with D.R. n. 344 of 29/03/2011, as amended
- GIVEN the regulations for research grants pursuant to Italian Law 240/2010, issued with D.R. n. 416 of 04/19/2011, as amended
- GIVEN the regulations on PhD courses, issued with D.R. n. 1468 of 05/12/2016, as amended
- GIVEN the regulations for incentives for the mobility of young researchers - Marco Polo Program, issued with D.R. n. 275 of 10/03/2017, published in the Extraordinary Supplement of the Official University Bulletin - n. 244 of 03/15/2017, as amended
- GIVEN the related Departmental Board's resolution (8 March 2024);

DECLARES

Art. 1 - Definition of the Program

The Marco Polo Program is aimed at providing mobility incentives, in order to promote research carried out abroad by young researchers from the University of Bologna.

Art. 2 - Host structure

The incentives are dedicated to research stays abroad at universities or public and private research centres (including research and development centres and divisions in private companies) located in foreign countries.

The Vatican City and the Republic of San Marino are not considered foreign Countries.

Research stays in companies as well as enrolment and attendance at study and / or training courses are excluded.

For reasons connected to the conduct of the research activity, upon request by the supervisor and approval by the Department Council, it is possible to choose a maximum of two host structures for the specified period, provided that the offices are located in the same geographical area.



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Art. 3 - Admission requirements

ONLY individuals who hold one of the following positions may apply:

1. **Fixed-term researcher:** holder of a contract with the University of Bologna pursuant to the current applicable regulations, pursuant to article 24, para. 3 of Italian law no. 240 of 29 December 2010;
 2. **Research fellow:** holder of a research grant contract with the University of Bologna pursuant to the current regulations governing research grants;
 3. **PhD student:** student enrolled in a PhD course with administrative headquarters at the University of Bologna;
- The Marco Polo incentive cannot be awarded for stays in the student's Country of birth, citizenship or residence.

PhD students must submit an application by the deadline for the end of the legal duration of the PhD course in which they are enrolled. All stays covered by the application must end by the same deadline.

It should be noted that research fellows and PhD students, beneficiaries of contracts funded with external resources, through agreements with third parties that allow the transfer of results and industrial property rights, can access the Marco Polo incentive if the research activity, agreed with the supervisor, which must be carried out during the stay abroad, is not necessarily and directly aimed at the research project in progress.

Parties referred to in points 2 and 3 who are in the situation described above must attach a self-certification to their application, drawn up in accordance with the example provided on the intranet page:

<https://intranet.unibo.it/RisorseUmane/Web7/Pagine/ProgrammaMarcoPolo.aspx>.

The eligibility requirements for the selection must be met upon the expiry date of the call and for the entire duration of the stay abroad.

The following three cases are possible:

1. if the beneficiary loses the eligibility requirements **before the start of the stay**, the application will not be considered valid. If the application has already been approved, the incentive will be revoked.
2. If the beneficiary loses the eligibility requirements **during the minimum period of three months of stay abroad**, the incentive will be revoked.
3. If the eligibility requirements are not maintained **for the entire duration of the stay abroad, without prejudice to the minimum period of three months**, the Department shall determine at its sole discretion whether to allow the continuation of the stay or to reduce the approved period. The Department must therefore rule on individual cases.

Art. 4 - Submission of Applications

The deadline for submitting applications in this selection round is **27 March 2024**.



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Under penalty of exclusion, applicants must complete the incentive application electronically via the website: <https://ricercatm.unibo.it/marcopolo/index.aspx>, by the deadline indicated above.

Applicants must submit an application to the department identified as follows:

- For fixed-term researchers: the relevant department
- For research fellows: the department to which the tutor belongs
- For PhD students: the relevant department, as identified by the teaching staff of the PhD course

The following documents must be attached to the application, exclusively in .pdf format:

- Presentation of the research project to be carried on abroad
- Letter of invitation from the host foreign institution, signed by the contact person, stating the period during which the institution is willing to host the applicant
- For PhD students: authorisation of the PhD course coordinator (to be ratified in the first available session of the teaching body)
- For research fellows: positive opinion of the tutor
- For fixed-term researchers: positive opinion of the department director
- For research fellows and PhD students, beneficiaries of contracts financed with external resources, through agreements with third parties, that allow for the transfer of results and industrial property rights: self-declaration drawn up according to the template available here: <https://intranet.unibo.it/HumanResources/Web7/Pages/MarcoPoloProgram.aspx>.

The department reserves the right to carry out checks on the authenticity of the documents provided, and on self-certifications.

Applications not completed through the online procedure, incomplete, or not closed by the deadline date of the call, will be excluded from the selection.

Art. 5 - Selection procedures

The comparative evaluation procedure of the candidates is adopted by the Board of the Department (as per the resolution of the Department Council of 04/12/2020), after defining the evaluation criteria.

The criteria are listed below, by priority and until the available funds are exhausted:

- The candidate has, according to UNIBO Regulation on PhD courses or his/her contract, the obligation to a stay abroad.
- The candidate does not possess Research funds (RFO) to his/her name.
- The candidate has not already taken advantage of the Marco Polo programme before.
- The stay abroad coincides with the last year of the PhD course or the contract.
- For three-year PhD courses, the stay coincides with the second year or, with equal priority, for four-year PhD courses if the stay coincides with the second or third year.
- For first-year PhD students, the allocation of the Marco Polo scholarship has less priority with regard to allocations to stays during the following PhD years.

The Departments may decide, in their own unquestionable judgment, whether to allow for or prohibit the possibility of applying for the Marco Polo incentive more than once, even in the same



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year, and even if it has already been used.

Art. 6 - Outcomes and obligations before departure

To verify the outcome of their application, applicants must access the Marco Polo site with their credentials and see if the project has been approved or rejected by following the path "*Applications submitted*" -> "*Application status*".

Individual communications will not be sent to confirm that the incentive has been obtained.

To apply for funding, successful applicants must deliver the "Marco Polo Incentive Request Form" to the Department Secretariat; this is available on the following intranet page: <https://intranet.unibo.it/RisorseUmane/Web7/Pagine/ProgrammaMarcoPolo.aspx>

Before departure, PhD students must deliver the authorisation issued by the Academic Board to AFORM – PhD Unit. For more information, write to: aform.udottricerca@unibo.it.

Art. 7 - Incentive amount

The monthly amount, determined in relation to the geographical area of destination, is as follows:

1. Europe and Africa area: € 1,150
2. America, Asia, Oceania area: € 1,350

The total amount is proportionally reduced if the actual stay abroad is less than the one that has been authorised, without prejudice to the mandatory minimum period of three months.

The incentive granted can only be increased if the Department approves the request for an extension of the period.

The Department, at its discretion, may supplement the amount of the scholarships with reimbursements upon presentation of supporting documents proving travel and accommodation expenses.

Art. 8 - Methods of disbursement of the incentive

The incentives referred to in this call are financed with funds from the university budget established annually and may be co-financed by the departments with their own funds, without prejudice to any reporting or other constraints connected to said funds.

The incentives will be paid in the following ways:

a) Competitive research funding: for fixed-term researchers

- The funds are made available to the beneficiary, subject to approval of the report by the Department Council and in compliance with the regulations on missions
- The funds must be used primarily for the reimbursement of travel expenses relating to the approved stay. Any residual amounts must be used to cover expenses strictly related to research support

b) Post-graduate research scholarships: for research fellows and PhD students

- Funds are paid by the Department in deferred monthly instalments
- Funds are exempt from income taxes pursuant to art. 4, paragraph 3 of Italian law no. 210/1998 and are not subject to social security contributions



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The beneficiaries of the aforementioned scholarships are granted extension of insurance coverage against the risk of accidents and civil liability during their stay abroad, after completing the necessary administrative procedures.

Art. 9 - Start date of the stay

The application for an incentive may relate to:

- Stays with scheduled departures no later than six months from the expiry date of the call
- Stays that started before the call was issued, as long as the return is expected after the deadline of the call itself. Departure prior to the deadline of the call does not provide any right to the incentive if the application is not approved by the department. Beginning the stay prior to the expiry of the call does not give any right to the incentive if the application is not approved by the department.

Art. 10 - Duration of the stay

The duration of the stay may be between a minimum of three months and a maximum of six months. For stays longer than three months, each portion of a month exceeding 15 days is considered a complete month.

The stay abroad must be CONTINUOUS, without interruptions, except for serious and documented personal and family reasons, with the exception of interruptions for scientific reasons authorised by the tutor or for the need to be present on site for activities which cannot be postponed or scheduled connected to institutional commitments and/or contractual obligations of the beneficiary towards the university, or for reasons of force majeure linked to the Covid19 pandemic. The interruption of the stay must be immediately notified to the department secretariat.

Art. 11 - Modification of the application after approval

The beneficiary may submit a reasoned request for the following changes to the approved application before starting their stay abroad:

- Significant advance/postponement of the departure and return dates indicated in the application
- Reduction of the months of stay abroad, provided that the stay is not less than three months. Otherwise, the incentive will be revoked

The department director will decide on these requests, after obtaining the tutor's opinion.

Departure can be postponed with respect to the date indicated in the application but must be a maximum of 6 months from the expiry date of the notice, under penalty of revocation of the incentive.

In all cases, the Marco Polo incentive must be fully used within twelve months of the expiry date of the call.

Art. 12 - Waiver of the incentive

Anyone who intends to withdraw a submitted application or renounce the incentive must immediately notify the Department Secretariat sending a PDF declaration waiving the incentive at difa.contratti@unibo.it with a copy of a valid ID/Passport.

Art. 13 - Check of the activity carried out



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Within 60 days of the end of the stay, under penalty of revocation of the incentive, the beneficiary must submit:

- The scientific report on the research activity carried out
- The attestation of the host structure, explicitly specifying the period of stay and containing a brief description of the activities carried out by the beneficiary

The final report and the letter from the host structure must be uploaded to the Marco Polo application by accessing the site <https://ricercatm.unibo.it/marcopolo/index.aspx>, using institutional credentials and selecting the options "Applications submitted" from the menu -> "View question" -> "Upload final report and letter from the host structure". This documentation will be evaluated by the Department's Board.

If the documents are not uploaded to the appropriate application by the deadline and, if the Department Council expresses a negative assessment, the incentive paid will be revoked and the beneficiaries will be required to return the amount received.

Art. 14 - Incompatibility and prohibition of overlapping

Scholarships granted under this call are incompatible with mobility contributions funded by other entities if they are aimed at covering the same period of stay abroad, even if granted for a different reason.

The scholarships provided under this call for applications can be combined with the increase in the PhD scholarship for activities abroad provided for by the applicable doctorate regulations; the maximum amount cannot exceed the amount of the scholarship granted.

Furthermore, scholarships awarded under this call for applications cannot be combined with funding for international mobility (e.g. scholarships funded by the Erasmus Plus Studio and Erasmus Plus Internship program).

Art. 15 - Final regulations

For any other element not covered by this announcement, please refer to the regulations for incentives for the mobility of young researchers - Marco Polo Program, issued with D.R. n. 275 of 10/03/2017.

Submission of the application through the online procedure, pursuant to art. 3, implies acceptance by the candidate of the rules contained in this call and in the Regulations for incentives for the mobility of young researchers - Marco Polo Program, issued with D.R. n. 275 of 10/03/2017

For further information on the Marco Polo Program, see the intranet page: <https://intranet.unibo.it/RisorseUmane/Web7/Pagine/ProgrammaMarcoPolo.aspx>

Person in charge of the administrative procedure: dr. Laura Tombelli

For information relating to: publication and deadline of the call for applications, application evaluation criteria, selection results, variations with respect to the application, payment of the incentive, please contact difa.contratti@unibo.it